



Taxus baccata English Yew¹

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INTRODUCTION

English Yew is most easily recognized in its trimmed form as dense hedges and screens, or shaped into topiary, but this dark green evergreen makes an outstanding specimen (Fig. 1). If left to grow naturally, it reaches 20 to 25 feet in height with a spread of 15 to 20 feet in most situations. Plants grow slowly and have been known to reach heights of 50 feet. The shiny, very dark green leaves are 0.5 to 1.5 inches long. The attractive, reddish-brown trunk is often fluted and can become quite massive. The inconspicuous flowers appear in spring and are followed by the production of small, showy, red, fleshy fruits which contain one of the most poisonous seeds known, capable of poisoning both man and livestock. Taxine, the toxic chemical, is found in the leaves, bark, and hard part of the seed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Taxus baccata*

Pronunciation: TACK-sus back-AY-tuh

Common name(s): English Yew

Family: *Taxaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5B through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; hedge; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; specimen; Christmas tree; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

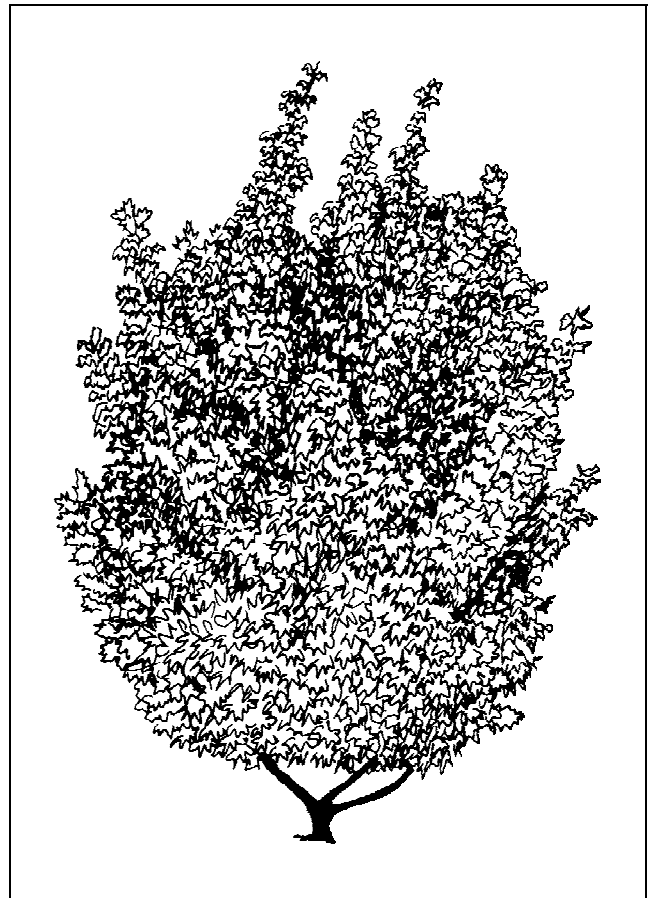


Figure 1. Middle-aged English Yew.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 20 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more

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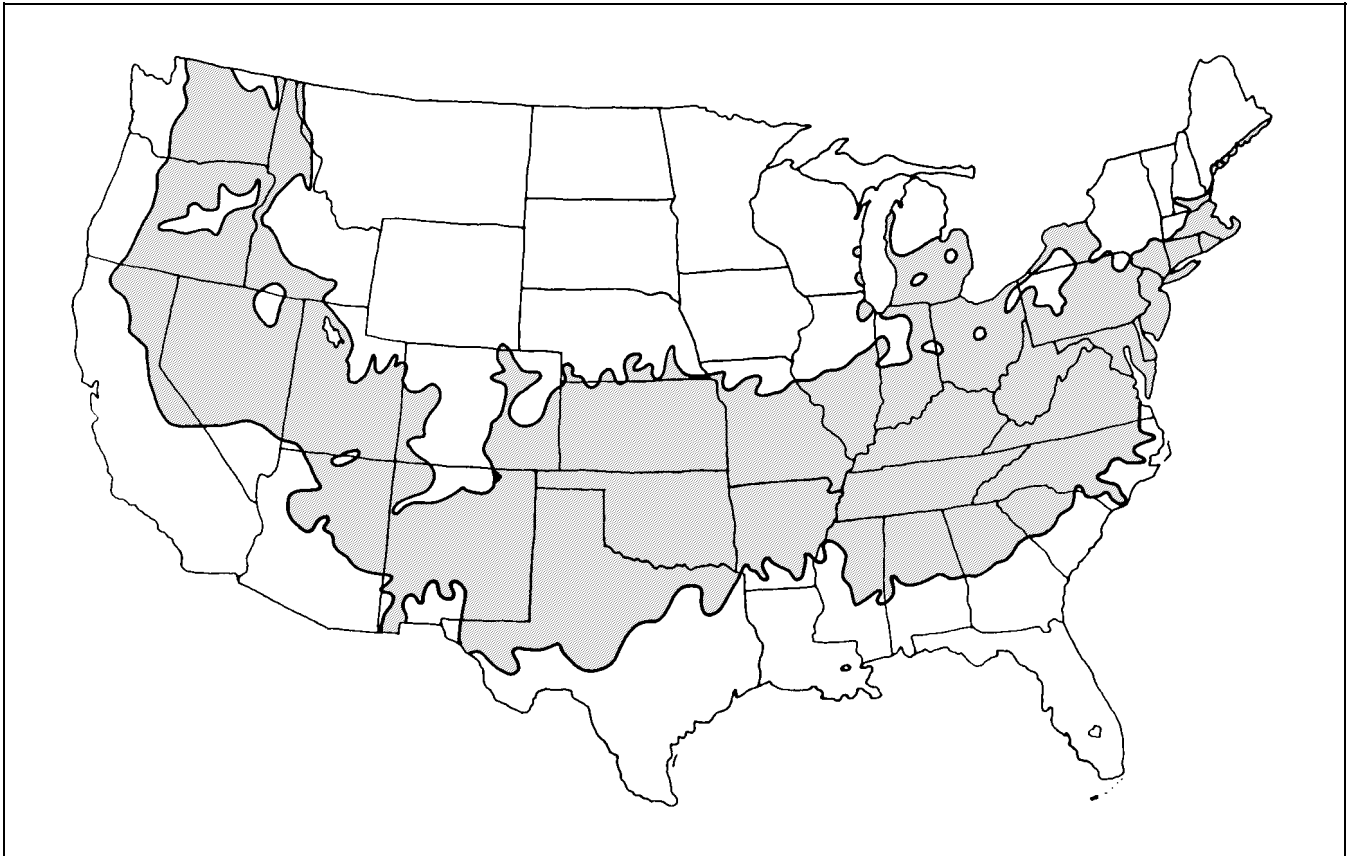


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: linear

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see; parallel

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen; needle leaf evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green; yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: < .5 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; very showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green

Current year twig thickness: thin

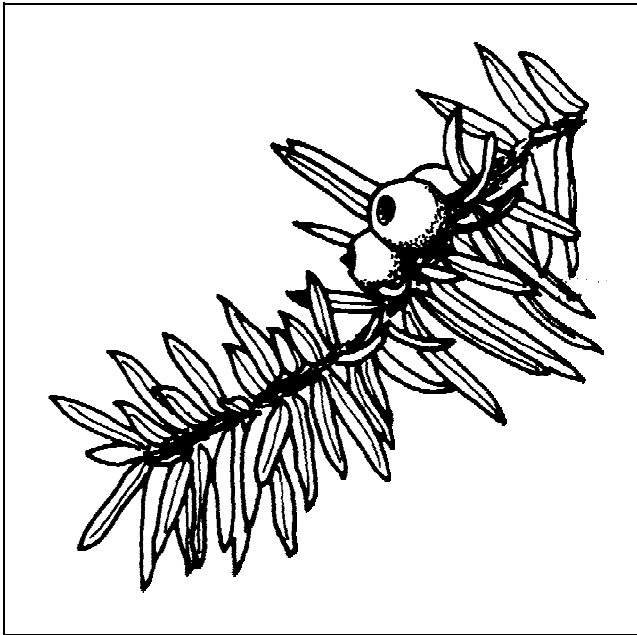


Figure 3. Foliage of English Yew.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;
acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests
or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Yew is used in the tree form primarily to create a screen, to develop into a topiary or to plant as a large clipped specimen on a large estate or other large landscape. The dense crown makes it especially suited for a screen provided plants are located in full-day sun and they are given plenty of room to spread. If lateral space is limited, select one of the narrow, upright cultivars.

English Yew should be grown in full sun on well-drained, moist soil, acid or alkaline.

Propagation is by seeds (with difficulty), cuttings, or grafting.

Pests

Taxus mealybug, black vine weevil, *Taxus* scale, and yew-gall midge can cause some damage.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.